

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Hamilton Springs Blackberry Removal - Recurring Maintenance

Project Manager: Brady Allen, EWP-4

Location: Skamania County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to remove invasive Himalayan blackberry from the area surrounding artificial chum spawning channels at Hamilton Springs near North Bonneville, WA. This would be a recurring action and would occur in late summer/early fall when the spawning channels are dry and the closest waterway is Hamilton Creek, which is over 600 feet away from where the work would occur.

Chainsaws would be used to cut blackberry back 10 feet or more from the channels. Debris would be moved to uphill location and would be cut up into small pieces with chainsaws. Herbicides would be sprayed on the remaining blackberry. BPA would minimize risk of drift by following label instructions and herbicide would be mixed off site and application would be by backpack sprayers.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with NMFS on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System. Funding supports ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the main stem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.)

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996; 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025, Interim Final Rule) and the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

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Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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Project Site Description

Hamilton Springs is within the town of North Bonneville, WA. The chum spawning channels were constructed in the early 2000s and are now surrounded by Himalayan blackberry. The spawning channels are dry in the summer and fall and the nearest waterbody containing water during the summer and fall is Hamilton Creek, which is more than 600 feet from the project area. Some mature black cottonwood is also in the vicinity.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed action and determined that there would be no potential to effect historic and cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The site would be accessed on foot and no ground disturbance would occur.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only non-native/invasive Himalayan blackberry would be removed from the site and only non-native/invasive Himalayan blackberry would be treated with herbicides.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Non-native/invasive Himalayan blackberry offers little if any habitat value for any wildlife that may be in the area.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The spawning channels would be dry during blackberry removal. The closest waterway would be more than 600 feet from the treatment area; herbicide would not runoff or enter the standing water.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands in the area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur above ground.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation removal would not alter land use in the area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are solely for routine maintenance and monitoring and would not result in any changes to the existing visual quality of project sites.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Emissions from vehicles and power tools would be extremely minor, temporary, and cause no lasting changes to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicles and equipment would create an increase in ambient noise. However, these effects would be minor and temporary.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to ensure human health and safety. Machinery would be operated solely by trained and licensed personnel.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: N/A

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA vegetation management has coordinated with the landowner (City of North Bonneville) and received written permission for vegetation removal at Hamilton Springs.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: **EDWARD GRESH**
Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

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